

# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **Congressman John Conyers, Jr.**

**Fourteenth District, Michigan  
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary  
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus**

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### **CONYERS OPPOSES HOMELAND SECURITY BILL**

Congressman John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee and Dean of the Congressional Black Caucus, issued the following statement regarding the Homeland Security Legislation:

“The new tone of bipartisanship that the Majority sells beyond the beltway ended as they reentered the confines of Washington, D.C. We saw a draft of this bill late yesterday afternoon, were not given any opportunity to make improvements, and we find ourselves on the Floor today under a closed rule that prohibits any amendments. For those people who bought the Majority’s sale of goods on Election Day – welcome to the new halls of Congress.

What the Majority is doing today is asking us to reorganize the federal government in an unprecedented manner, without reforming the most problematic agencies, ignoring the interests of our brave working men and women, and without spending a penny.

To begin with, the proposal before us does nothing to reform or reorganize the two most critical elements of our security apparatus – the FBI and the CIA. These are the key agencies that failed to connect the dots before September 11. Yet the bill not only fails to reorganize these critical agencies, it does not even set up a commission to review the intelligence problems relating to the terrorist attack.

The bill is also an insult to the tens of thousands of Americans in the organized labor movement who work for the federal government and will be brought into the new homeland security agency by the civil service laws. Does any one remember who the heroes of September 11 were? The fire fighters and policeman of New York – and all were members in good standing of organized labor. Can anyone suggest that civil service and union protections did anything to weaken their resolve or diminish their bravery? Of course not.

I also cannot see how this proposal could possibly be “budget neutral.” The proposal combines over 20 federal agencies and consolidates 170,000 federal employees. Transition costs alone could easily cost more than \$1 billion. Add to that the costs of retraining, attrition and new hires, improved technology and security procedures, new offices and structures, and hundreds of new tasks that government entities will need to perform to protect this nation - there is no way that all of that will be free to the American taxpayer, and the Majority needs to be up-front about this.

I must also object to several provisions in the bill which fall within the Judiciary Committee’s jurisdiction. In terms of immigration, I am concerned that by placing the entire Immigration and Naturalization Service into the Homeland Security Department, the bill tilts far too strongly in the direction of treating all of our immigrants as terrorists, rather than contributing members of our society.

Among other things, the legislation fails to ensure that the service and enforcement functions coordinate their efforts. It also rests vast new statutory authority in the Attorney General to administer the Executive Office of Immigration Review, which will no doubt lead to the elimination of appellate review of immigration cases.

The bill also includes dangerous civil liability provisions. It would give the Secretary of Homeland Security authority to offer immunization from accountability to any corporation claiming to produce “anti-terrorism” products. Companies would be allowed to completely thwart their responsibility to the victims. In addition, this provision would shift the burden of identifying the wrongdoers and apportioning blame from the defendants to the victim.

I would note that the bill does constitute an improvement over the House passed bill in that it no longer extends immunity to Argenbright Security, a company which has been cited for more security violations than any other, and which provided security at Dulles and Newark Airports on September 11. The problem is that the bill provides no recourse for the persons who had previously filed suits against airport screeners to be able to amend their complaint to seek recourse against the victim compensation fund. This is an obvious error and is totally inequitable, and I will push for a technical correction if it is not changed in the Senate.

The bill includes broad and far reaching provisions that would open secret grand jury proceedings to foreign courts and prosecutors and would give wiretap information to any foreign law enforcement officer upon the mere request of a government attorney. Countries with the most disgusting breaches of fundamental human rights would be able to benefit from the investigative resources of the United States. This is not only bad policy, it is immoral.

I believe we can come together on homeland security, but this is not the bill or the process to so.”

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